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Centrist House Democrats Unveil Prescription Drug Plan

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Congressman Jim Davis joined a group of centrist House Democrats in introducing the **Medicare Rx Now Act of 2003**, a bill to provide an affordable prescription drug benefit to seniors participating in the Medicare program.

Frustrated by Congress' failed attempts to provide meaningful relief to seniors who are grappling with the high cost of prescription drugs, Davis has been working with Representative Cal Dooley (CA) and others for the last year to develop a universal, progressive and affordable Medicare Part B drug benefit plan.

"A distressing number of our seniors are facing the agonizing choice of having to forego prescribed medications because the cost of these drugs far exceeds their limited budgets," said Congressman Davis. "The Medicare Rx Now Act serves as an important first step toward addressing this problem."

With the Congressional Budget Office scoring the plan at \$367 billion over 10 years, the Medicare Rx Now Act provides an affordable benefit that can be quickly implemented. The bill offers the most help to seniors with high drug costs and low incomes, while ensuring that all seniors receive relief.

Universal Eligibility and Zero Premium: This benefit would be incorporated into the existing Medicare Part B program. All Part B enrollees would receive coverage at no cost - no separate premium and no increase in Part B premium.

Universal Benefit Via Drug Card Plans: A wide variety of Medicare approved drug card plans would provide all Part B enrollees access to the market-based discounts widely available to those with private insurance. These discounts would apply to all drug purchases.

Universal, High Deductible Benefit: All Part B enrollees, whose drug costs have exceeded \$4,000 in the calendar year, would have 80% of the cost of their drugs covered by Medicare for the remainder of the year.

Low-Income Benefits: All Part B enrollees, whose income is below 200% of the poverty level, would receive discounts on all their drug purchases. According to the Congressional Research Service, nationwide 15.9 million Medicare recipients live below 200% of poverty. In Florida, over 1.2 million Medicare beneficiaries live on incomes below 200% of poverty.